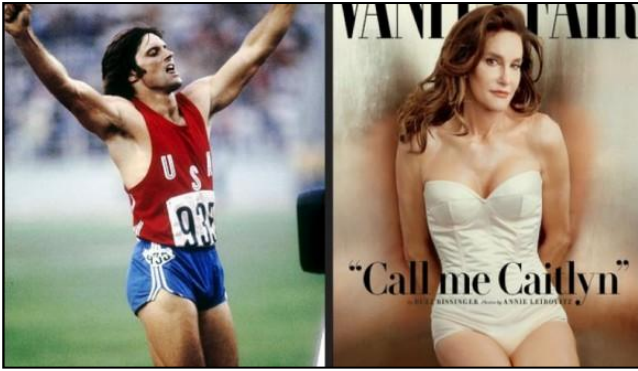


Women's History Month Essay Contest – Pre-Event Reading Material

Caitlyn Jenner Biography



Caitlyn Marie Jenner (born October 28, 1949), formerly known as Bruce Jenner, is an American television personality and retired Olympic gold medal-winning decathlete. Jenner was a college football player for the Graceland Yellowjackets before incurring a knee injury requiring surgery. Coach L. D. Weldon, who had coached Olympic decathlete Jack Parker, convinced Jenner to try the decathlon. After intense training, Jenner won the 1976 Olympics decathlon title at the Montreal Summer Olympics. Jenner set a third successive world record while winning the Olympics. The winner of the Olympic decathlon is traditionally given the unofficial title of "world's greatest athlete." With that

stature, Jenner subsequently established a career in television, film, authoring, as a Playgirl cover model, auto racing, and business.

Jenner has six children from marriages to ex-wives Chrystie Crowover, Linda Thompson and Kris Jenner. Since 2007, Jenner has appeared on the reality television series *Keeping Up with the Kardashians*. Previously identifying publicly as a male, Jenner revealed her identity as a trans woman in April 2015 and publicly announced her name change from Bruce to Caitlyn in a July 2015 *Vanity Fair* cover story. Her name and gender change became official on September 25, 2015. She has been called the most famous openly transgender woman in the world. Jenner currently stars in the reality television series *I Am Cait*, which focuses on her gender transition.

In an April 2015, *20/20* interview with Diane Sawyer, Jenner came out as a trans woman, saying she had dealt with gender dysphoria since her youth, and that, "for all intents and purposes, I'm a woman." Jenner cross dressed for many years and took hormone replacement therapy but stopped after her romance with Kris Kardashian in the early 1990s became more serious. While she has undergone some cosmetic surgery, she has neither undergone sex reassignment surgery nor ruled it out; she stated that, for her, life as a woman is primarily a matter of mental state and lifestyle. She said she has never been sexually attracted to men, but has instead always been sexually attracted to women, and that, keeping in mind the difficulty people have understanding the difference between sexual orientation and gender identity, she will identify as asexual for now.

Jenner's announcement that she is transgender came at an unprecedented time for trans visibility, including legislative initiatives. The *20/20* interview had 20.7 million viewers, making it television's "highest-ever rated newsmagazine telecast among adults 18–49 and adults 25–54". *The Daily Beast* wrote that Jenner's honesty, vulnerability, and fame may have caused "cheap jokes" about trans people to "seem mean to a mainstream audience on an unprecedented scale".

In October 2015, *Glamour* named Jenner one of its *25 Glamour Women of the Year*, calling her a "Trans Champion." Feminist author Germaine Greer called the magazine's decision misogynistic, questioning whether a transgender woman could be better than "someone who is just born a woman." James Smith, husband of Moira Smith, the only female New York Police Department officer to die on September 11, 2001, returned Moira's "Woman of the Year" award, given posthumously. Referring to Jenner as a man, he stated that he found *Glamour* giving Jenner the same award insulting to Moira's memory, and referred to the matter as a publicity stunt.

In November 2015, Jenner was listed as one of *Entertainment Weekly's 2015 Entertainers of the Year*. In December 2015, she was named Barbara Walters' Most Fascinating Person of 2015. Also in that month, she was listed on *Time* magazine's eight-person shortlist for the 2015 Person of the Year, and Bing released its list of the year's "Most Searched Celebrities", which Jenner was at the top of, and declared Jenner's *Vanity Fair* cover the second in a list of "top celeb moments of 2015."

Jenner received the Arthur Ashe Courage Award during the 2015 ESPY Awards in July 2015. ESPN executive producer Maura Mandt said Jenner was given the award because "she has shown the courage to embrace a truth that had been hidden for years, and to embark on a journey that may not only give comfort to those facing similar circumstances, but can also help to educate people on the challenges that the transgender community faces." She is the third consecutive openly LGBT (Lesbian Gay Bisexual Transgender) person to receive the award following footballer Michael Sam (2014) and anchorwoman Robin Roberts (2013).

Adapted from:

Caitlyn Jenner. (2016, March 5). In *Wikipedia*. Retrieved March 6, 2016, from https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Caitlyn_Jenner

Women's History Month Essay Contest – Pre-Event Reading Material

Ellen DeGeneres Biography

Ellen DeGeneres is one of the most popular contemporary comedians and the host of a successful daytime talk show. She is perhaps best known to young audiences as the voice of the endearing but absentminded fish Dory in the blockbuster animated hit *Finding Nemo* (2003), a role that perfectly captured her rambling, seemingly unrehearsed comic style. After rising through the ranks of stand-up comedy during the 1980s and early 1990s, DeGeneres became a successful television star with her show *Ellen* in the mid-1990s. Her career became temporarily derailed in the late 1990s, but she got back on track a few years later, surpassing her earlier successes by a long shot.

DeGeneres was born outside New Orleans and spent most of her childhood there, living with her parents and her older brother. As a child, DeGeneres spent much of her free time exploring the city. After DeGeneres graduated from high school in 1976, she moved back to New Orleans, holding down a series of jobs, none of which suited her personality. Ultimately she realized that she did not like following other people's rules, and she would have to make a career for herself that allowed for independence.



At the age of twenty-three, she started to flesh out a comedy routine, first performing just for friends and then at local coffeehouses and comedy clubs. In 1982 she entered a national talent contest held, sending in a videotape of her stand-up act. When DeGeneres won the contest, earning the title of "Funniest Person in America," she went immediately from local New Orleans comic to nationally recognized up-and-coming comedian. Over the next several years, she traveled around the country performing stand-up comedy, and she appeared on several HBO specials.

In 1986 DeGeneres made history in her first-ever appearance on the *Tonight Show* Starring Johnny Carson. Most comedians who appeared on the *Tonight Show* performed their stand-up routine and then returned backstage, never being invited to sit on the couch and have an on-camera chat with Carson, but she was the first female comedian to be asked to sit on the couch after a first-time performance on the show.

In 1991 DeGeneres was honored as best female stand-up comic at the 1991 American Comedy Awards. About the same time, she branched out to begin acting in television series. She appeared in a couple of short-lived sitcoms, before earning her own show. The reviews and the ratings steadily improved, as more and more viewers connected with DeGeneres's oddball humor and appealing, average-gal persona. DeGeneres earned numerous nominations for Emmy Awards, and in 1997 she won the prestigious Peabody Award for her work on the show.

In the spring of 1997, DeGeneres made pop-culture history by having her character come out as a lesbian, becoming the first gay lead character on a network television sitcom. At the same time, DeGeneres herself came out to millions with a cover story in *Time* magazine announcing that she is gay. The announcement came as no surprise—fans and journalists had speculated that it was coming—but it still generated a media storm. Many fans wrote supportive letters, while others were scandalized by the news. During 1997–98, *Ellen* began losing viewers. Some believed that the network simply did not want the controversy generated by the announcement about Ellen's sexuality. Some major advertisers had pulled out, and the network, fearful of offending viewers, began attaching warning labels to episodes that showed Ellen kissing another woman or discussing her sexual orientation. The show was cancelled.

After her show's cancellation, DeGeneres went through a difficult period, both professionally and personally. Her highly publicized relationship and August of 2000 breakup eroded much of the goodwill fans felt toward her—or at least that is what DeGeneres believed. She appeared in a number of films during this period, but none of these established her as a successful film actress. In 2001, DeGeneres starred in a short-lived sitcom, which was praised by reviewers but never attracted a large audience.

Over the next year or so, DeGeneres began showing up on television more and more often. Suddenly, in 2003, DeGeneres was everywhere. She published a best-selling book of comic essays and she lent her voice to what became the highest-grossing animated movie of all time: *Finding Nemo*. In the fall of 2003, DeGeneres found herself once again at the center of a self-titled television program. In its first season, *The Ellen DeGeneres Show* earned positive reviews and solid ratings across the nation. The successful year was topped off with a record twelve Emmy Award nominations in 2004, the most ever received by a talk show in its debut season.

Adapted from:

Ellen DeGeneres Biography. (n.d.). In *Encyclopedia of World Biography*. Retrieved March 6, 2016, from, <http://www.notablebiographies.com/news/Ca-Ge/DeGeneres-Ellen.html#ixzz426LXe8tH>

Women's History Month Essay Contest – Pre-Event Reading Material

Jaden Smith Biography



Jaden Christopher Syre Smith (born July 8, 1998) is an American actor and rapper. He is the son of actors Jada Pinkett Smith and Will Smith, elder brother of singer Willow Smith and younger half-brother of Trey Smith. His first movie role was in the 2006 film *The Pursuit of Happyness*, with his father. He has also appeared in the remakes of *The Day the Earth Stood Still* and *The Karate Kid*, as well as the 2013 film *After Earth*, also with his father.

Although Will Smith is proud that his son Jaden Smith keeps challenging masculinity norms through fashion, the movie star admitted his initial reaction wasn't as supportive. "He is so completely comfortable and confident in who he is and when I look at him, I really admire that," Smith said in a recent interview with News. "Jaden has his own clothing line and then he started wearing a skirt."

Smith added, "Then I was like, 'OK. You cannot wear a skirt.' He said to me, 'Dad, it's fine. It's going to be so hot all the kids will be wearing it.' I said, 'No, the kids are not going to do it because their parents will have sense enough to not let them do it.' But he's confident in who he is and who he wants to be."

In a recent interview with BBC Radio, Smith said that, "Jaden is 100 percent fearless. He will do anything, you know? So as a parent it's scary, it's really terrifying, but he is completely willing to live and die by his own artistic decisions and he just doesn't concern himself with what people think."

At the end of January, Jaden posed shirtless in a skirt with a flower behind his ear for a picture he posted on Instagram. Jaden also found himself in the headlines recently when he joined the illustrious ranks of models chosen to represent Louis Vuitton — for their new women's line. Smith posted these photo on Instagram and many are recognizing him for continuing to defy gender stereotypes.

In one picture, Smith's fingernails are painted, his hair covers one eye, he has toned abs and arms, and he wears a skirt. The image supports the idea that a person can appear traditionally masculine and feminine at the same time. The photo has nearly 90,000 likes as of writing time and many commenters have applauded Smith on Instagram. When one critic argued that Smith should dress however he wants in the privacy of his own home rather than share this particular look on Instagram, a fan said that Smith should be able to dress however he feels comfortable in front of others.

Smith is known for breaking gender barriers, particularly in fashion. Just last year, Smith famously wore a dress to prom with "Hunger Games" actress Amandla Stenberg, who recently came out as bisexual. Around the time that Jaden was spotted wearing a dress last spring, he and his sister Willow went on to criticize gender roles and norms in an interview with GulfNews TV.



"Nobody ever thinks, 'Yo who made all these rules?'" Jaden said. "Who was here and made all these rules? Because, I'm equally as smart as them, and I don't necessarily agree with all the rules that they established before I came into the picture." Jaden and Willow also said that they consider themselves "misfits" because they do "a lot of things that are out of the ordinary."

Adapted from:

Donovan, L. (2016, January 26). *Jaden Smith's new Instagram post is worth your applause*. Retrieved March 6, 2016, from <http://www.attn.com/stories/5459/jaden-smith-gender-fluidity-instagram>

Jaden Smith. (2015, December 12). In *Wikipedia*. Retrieved March 6, 2016, from https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jaden_Smith

Verhoeven, B. (2016, February 11). *Will Smith's initial reaction to son Jaden's gender-bending style: 'You cannot wear a skirt'*. Retrieved March 6, 2016 from <http://www.thewrap.com/jaden-smith-will-smith-reaction-you-cannot-wear-a-skirt/>